

# **A Study of Second Corinthians**

## **Week Seven**

### **2 Corinthians 9:1-10:11**

#### **Day One**

9:1 There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the saints. 2 For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. 3 But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. 4 For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we — not to say anything about you — would be ashamed of having been so confident.

v. 1 – Paul must have previously taught and briefed them on the need that existed and their need to help meet that need. I don't think I ever included the reference from Acts that probably mentioned the need for which the offering was raised:

One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:28-30).

It is worth noting that God seemed to use famines to move people and develop stories. As one example, consider how God used a famine to get Joseph to Egypt (see Psalm 105:16). God rules in the affairs of men and, as hard as that is to comprehend, famines are part of his plan. **Why not study famines in the Bible and see what I mean?**

v. 2 – So Paul used the Macedonians to stir the Corinthians to give and then used the Corinthians to move the Macedonians to give. Was this manipulation? I don't think so. Paul was just following the advice found in Hebrews

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24).

That is the reason why you should testify about what God has done for you and also give a report on what you are doing for God. Both may encourage others in ways that you could not think of. Too often Christians suffer from what I call "false humility." They don't talk about what God is doing in their life because they don't want anyone to think that they are proud. Sometimes they even deny what God is doing or what God enabled them to do. **Are you guilty of false humility?**

vs. 3&4 – Paul was a good organizer. He didn't leave anything to chance where he had some control over the situation. Plus he wanted to make sure that the Corinthians finished what they had started. That is a good habit to develop—finish up all good

intentions and projects that you said you would do “one day.” **This is the day that the Lord has made, so why not allow this day to be that “one day” you’ve always talked about? What can work on today and this week that will enable you to finish something you said you would do?**

There are some I know who should be ashamed of their lack of follow up to their commitment. I hope you are not one of them.

## **Day Two**

5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given. 6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

v. 5 – Once again we see the pains Paul took to make sure that the offering was a “freewill” offering and not one with any coercion. I would think that is why he was writing and not planning on coming himself to finish the collection. Paul would deliver the offering, but he didn’t at that point want anyone giving because of his presence. I appreciate how spiritual Paul was. He wanted people to be led and give because of the Spirit. I have said more than once that I wish some who raise money or taking offerings in the modern church would heed Paul’s example.

v. 6 – Now Paul shifted from the procedure for giving to the philosophy for giving. Paul urged them to be generous, for a generous person will reap an abundant harvest. Does it mean that someone who gives money will receive money in return? Probably, but then again I would think it possible that God could provide any number of blessings for a generous person and that could include relationships, health, and business and ministry opportunities.

This is what I think Jesus meant when he said:

So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? (Luke 16:11).

I define true riches as significant opportunities to do what it is that you do best. Do I have a biblical basis for this theory? There is some but it is more based, however, on experience. If nothing else, generous people get the benefit of giving and we know that it is more blessed to give than receive. True riches, therefore, can be the chances to give even more away! **Does this make sense? Have I harmed the Scriptures by interpreting things this way?**

v. 7 – When people talk about giving, they often talk about sacrificial giving, which is giving in a way that creates a lack in the giver’s life. That is then referred to as a sacrifice. A biblical sacrifice isn’t someone giving something that they cannot afford to give or that they really want to hold onto for some reason. A biblical sacrifice is giving to God what *already belongs to Him*. So when you talk about your giving being a sacrifice, make sure you understand what you are saying.

God loves someone who gives with a joyous heart, not because they *have* to give but because they get to. I was in Cuba once and we left most of our clothes behind for the believers there. I had one shirt, however, that I had bought in Malaysia; it was my favorite shirt. I wrestled for three days about whether to give that shirt or not. Finally, I decided to leave it just because of the hold that piece of fabric had on my life! I don’t think I gave it joyfully; it was more of a duty.

After that I had to address the fact that some of my other clothes had a hold on me as well. Isn’t that silly to think that garments could get hold of me like that? But they did. Now I think I am at a point where I can give my clothes away joyfully, not just those I am not using or don’t want anymore, but also those I have use for or enjoy. **Does anything have a hold on you that could keep you from being the kind of joyful giver that God loves?**

v. 8 – It is God’s grace when you have enough to meet your needs and help with the needs of others. Why do I point that out? I say this because there are times when I think I have had abundant grace and provision because of what I have done. Therefore what I have God owes me and what I give is mine to give. Instead, I must keep my perspective that what I have, no matter how faithful I am or have been, is the result of God’s faithfulness. When you help meet a need, it is a function of God’s faithfulness to that person. Keep that in mind and don’t draw too much attention to yourself.

### Day Three

9 As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." 10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. 12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.

v. 9 – Paul quoted Psalm 112:9 in this verse. It is interesting to me how many psalms and proverbs address the issue of the poor. I have asked myself, “Why would David, the psalmists and the wisdom writers be so interested and concerned with the poor?” My only answer is that the poor are on God’s heart, so anyone who is close to God should also have a burden for the poor.

What we do for the poor is something that we do for God, for the poor cannot repay us for our good deeds. Here are a few things the wisdom writers had to say about the issue of the poor:

He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God (Proverbs 14:31).

He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done (Proverbs 19:17).

Rich and poor have this in common: The LORD is the Maker of them all (Proverbs 22:2).

### **To put it simply, what are you currently doing for the poor?**

v. 10 – This verse tells us that God is involved in the entire giving process. He provides the seed, brings the seed to bear fruit and watches over the harvest of those who sow. It would seem that I simply need to cooperate with the process that is in God's heart. I am the vessel through which God touches the lives of the poor. I must, however, be a willing vessel, even an alert vessel—alert to the opportunities that are before me.

I have been working for the last 11 years in Zimbabwe and I am aware today that I have not done nearly enough for the poor there. That is about to change. I am fascinated by my lack of interest or alertness for the previous 11 years, I must admit.

vs. 11&12 – If I am alert to the opportunities, then God will provide the means by which I can be generous. But my generosity isn't the issue or the focus. The result of my giving is God's glory! People will thank God and not me for their blessing and that's the way it should be. **Can you give in such a way that it attracts maximum attention to God and His love and minimum attention to you? Are you willing to direct the attention off you and on God while you give?**

I see people's needs, God provides the resources, I give and the people give thanks to God. That seems to be the "order of service" for Christian giving. **Does your giving currently cause people to thank God for you and your gifts? If not, what changes do you need to make in your giving habits that will cause this order to be restored or prevalent?**

### **Day Four**

13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. 14 And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. 15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

v. 13 – There is something about generosity that goes hand and hand with the gospel. Historically, it has been the Christians that have built schools, hospitals and leper colonies. Have you ever seen a Buddhist hospital or Hindu school? It is absolutely impossible for someone like Mother Teresa to emerge from Islam or Scientology. They don't have the "theology" to create such a person. Their good deeds are only for the purpose of conversion or political influence. It is only followers of Jesus that have their giving grounded in God and not in the works of men. **Does this sound harsh or judgmental? It isn't meant to be; just a statement of fact.**

Islam does teach that the giving of alms is godly. Buddhist monks are beggars themselves. I am not sure what Hindus, but I only have to look at India to get an idea that they don't do much.

**What did Jesus say about generosity? Why not take some time now or soon to look at what Jesus had to say about giving and the poor? That would make an interesting study.** But you can't just study; you have to look to how you can apply the principles. By doing, you will prove yourself a follower of Jesus and confess by your actions that Jesus' words are true. **Are you ready to do so?** If you need a place to invest in the poor, please write and let me know. I can help.

v. 14 – There is a personal or "selfish" benefit to giving. When you do, the recipients thank God and pray for you. Even if they don't know who gave, God does and He will return the blessing. You know this is true. **How do you feel when you give something to someone who is grateful, who thanks God for you? There is no feeling like it in the world. Then why not replicate that feeling as often as possible?**

**Also what are you doing to impart these truths to your children, grandchildren and other youth in your life?** Children usually must be taught to share instead of hoard. When my children were young, we would take the time before Christmas to give things away in preparation for receiving gifts. We took the opportunity to give so we could receive.

v. 15 – What is the indescribable gift that Paul referred to here? It seems that it was the gift of being able to give and participate in the blessings that came from generosity. God gives us opportunities to do good and it is an expression of His grace. He could meet all needs, but He allows us to participate with Him:

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

**What good deeds has God prepared for you to meet through giving? Are you being faithful to these opportunities?**

## Day Five

10:1 By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you — I, Paul, who am "timid" when face to face with you, but "bold" when away! 2 I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world. 3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

v. 1 – There seems to be a radical topic change at this point. Some believe that these last three chapters were another letter that Paul wrote to the Corinthians that was “tacked on” to the one we have been studying. I don’t know what to think about that, but I have no problem if that is the case.

At any rate, as I study this verse, I don’t think I have ever seen the truth that lies therein. Paul was so careful not to order people to do things that were in their best spiritual interests. He rather appealed to them, even passionately at times. In this case, however, he appealed to them by the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Jesus was gentle and meek and Jesus is our model for life and leadership. So we must learn to emulate and imitate Christ and not the ways of other leaders.

Even Jesus bore witness to His ministry style:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Even the prophets predicted Jesus’ ministry style and heart:

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope" (Isaiah 42:1-4).

**If Jesus is our model, then how closely does your leadership style resemble that of Jesus? What can you do to be more like Him as you lead? If you aren’t leading, then now is the perfect time to establish the leadership philosophy that you will follow when you do lead. How do you think you or anyone can appeal to someone to do God’s will in the “gentleness and meekness of Christ”? Is that possible for us or only for Jesus? What do you think that style would look and act like?**

v. 2 – It seems that someone accused Paul of writing strong letters when he wasn’t there but being meek and laid back in person. Paul urged them not to misinterpret his

gentleness when he was last among them. He was ready to confront those who were causing trouble or questioning his leadership style and motives.

v. 3 – As usual, Paul had a good grasp of the issue at hand and the issue was a spiritual one. He was not doing business as the world did business; he wasn't patronizing the Corinthians to get their money nor was he manipulating them. He was dealing with attitudes that had their roots in the demonic realm. He knew that he was waging war with spiritual opponents and acted accordingly. Not everyone would understand that then and they don't understand it now.

There are times when the reactions and attitudes you face don't make sense. They are irrational, stubborn or just plain evil. That's when you know that you are waging war against spiritual forces, even strongholds that exist in people's minds. These strongholds can be religious in nature or simply cultural. But they are strongholds nonetheless and they must be pulled down. That requires spiritual power and authority.

**Are you facing any strongholds as you seek to do God's will? What's more, do you have any strongholds in your own life and thinking? If so, are you prepared to change?**

### **Day Six**

5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 6 And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete. 7 You are looking only on the surface of things. If anyone is confident that he belongs to Christ, he should consider again that we belong to Christ just as much as he.

v. 5 – Paul had to demolish arguments that existed both among Jews and Gentiles. The Greek philosophers and Jewish lawyers all had ideas of who God was and how He would and should act. Paul was working to pull down every thought and attitude that exalted itself against the true ways of God. **Do you think there are any strongholds or attitudes today that need to be taken captive to Christ? You know there are.**

There are attitudes that there is no right and wrong, that everything is relative. There is the attitude that homosexuality is a relevant and legitimate lifestyle. There is the attitude that there are many ways to God. Every generation has its pretensions that set themselves up against the knowledge of God. It is our job to confront and refute those falsehoods, but we cannot do it in our own power or strength. We need the power of God! I need to do my part and then trust that God will provide what I cannot provide—the supernatural help against a superior enemy.

v. 6 – Paul wanted to make sure that his spiritual war did not carry over to his disciples in Corinth. He wanted to make sure that their attitudes and thinking were correct, and didn't want them to be among those whom he battled to bring thoughts to obedience. We must make sure that we aren't on the enemy's side when we go to war! I don't know

how Paul would “punish” acts of disobedience, but he must have had something in mind. Paul wasn’t fooling around! This was serious business because he was dealing with eternal issues.

v. 7 – There must have been some who were questioning (again) Paul’s credentials while confident in their own. They saw themselves in Christ, but perhaps weren’t so sure about Paul. That seems to be part of human nature. I think I am right in the things of God and that makes everyone else wrong, or perhaps just less spiritual than I. God is not like you or me, He is like Himself! When I think that I have God figured out, then I am guilty of arrogance and that attitude carries over to my relationships. This was true even among Old Testament believers as well:

You speak continually against your brother and slander your own mother's son. These things you have done and I kept silent; you thought I was altogether like you. But I will rebuke you and accuse you to your face (Psalm 50:20-21).

When God is silent, it isn’t necessarily because He agrees with you or your thinking; it’s because He is giving you room to repent!

Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? (Romans 2:4).

**Are you mistaking God’s kindness or silence for approval? Perhaps you need to reassess how you feel about other believers who don’t think or believe all that you do.**

### Day Seven

8 For even if I boast somewhat freely about the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than pulling you down, I will not be ashamed of it. 9 I do not want to seem to be trying to frighten you with my letters. 10 For some say, "His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing." 11 Such people should realize that what we are in our letters when we are absent, we will be in our actions when we are present.

v. 8 – Leaders do have authority and power, but those things are to build people up, not to tear them down. Are the people who follow you better off for doing so? Are you better off because of the leaders you follow? If the answer to either question is “no,” then it may be time to consider some changes, either to your leadership or follower-ship.

I have never claimed that leaders should not have power, as some have accused me of saying. I have said, however, that godly leaders are separated from un-godlike leaders by what they *do* with their power. The latter build their own kingdom; the former use their power to build people and God’s kingdom. **To which end are you using your leadership power?**

v. 9 – It was not Paul’s intent to frighten his readers, but it is always difficult to communicate by letter. The writer isn’t there to explain or clarify any misunderstandings. The reader doesn’t have the benefit of the writer’s presence to see his or her body language, facial expressions or to hear the tone of voice. This is why I prefer face-to-face meetings, but that wasn’t possible in Paul’s case. So he wrote letters and they were open to some misinterpretation and caused some anxiety among the readers.

v. 10 – Some have taken this verse to mean that Paul did not have a very good speaking style. I would agree with them. Let me explain why. What Paul did, he did in the power of the Spirit of God. There was nothing about him or in him that brought about the supernatural results that he did. It is interesting that his writings have lasted for 2,000 years, yet not much of his speaking still exists (there are a few sermons and comments recorded in Acts). So God took all of Paul and used him for His purposes, yet it was his writing, by far his greatest strength, that is still with us today.

That is why I urge you to maximize your strengths and not spend a moment more than necessary to improve your weaknesses. Your productivity lies in learning how to draw your full potential from the gifts and strengths God gave you. You don’t want to be well-rounded; you want to be focused and building with the gifts you have. That is how successful sports teams are built—around talent and everyone deploying their talent properly. The same is true for spiritual things.

v. 11 – Paul was warning those who underestimated his presence that he was ready to come and be as forceful in person as he was in his letters. I am not sure how Paul was going to back this veiled threat, but I’m sure he got his point across.

It is always amazing to me that Paul endured so much criticism. We know him as Saint Paul, they saw him as that man Paul, for they beheld all his strengths and weaknesses. Don’t ever expect to do something or anything for God without being criticized.

"A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!" (Matthew 10:24-25).

Don’t be surprised by your critics. They often aren’t a sign you are doing something wrong, but something right. If they criticized Jesus and Paul, then you will be criticized and scrutinized as well. Rejoice when that happens. Rejoice if it is happening now.